

SHORT NOTES

UNUSUAL COLOUR FORMS OF THE WOODLOUSE *PORCELLIO SCABER* (Latreille) ON MULL

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During a visit to Mull (VC103) in August 2002 we found two unusual colour forms of the common rough woodlouse *Porcellio scaber* (Latreille), neither of which we had seen before during 35 years of looking at woodlice. On the north side of Loch Spelve (grid ref NM675269) we found a specimen with a colour that might best be described as aquamarine or royal blue, with just a hint of slatiness. The colour did not fade in alcohol. Presumably this individual was infected with *Iridovirus*, but it did not have the purplish hue not uncommonly seen in *Trichoniscus pusillus* when infected with *Iridovirus* (colour plate in Hopkin, 1991). On the south shore of Loch Spelve (grid ref NM679261) we found an albino *P.scaber*, completely lacking pigment even in the eyes. Just the gut contents showed as a dark stripe. At both these sites, other well-grown individuals were all the usual slatey grey colour.

We are aware of other reports of albino and other abnormal colour forms of this and other species (e.g. Hopkin, 1989; Wijnhoven & Berg, 1999), but we were most surprised that these two very unusual finds were in close proximity to one another, especially as we are not aware of any indication that the two rather different conditions could be caused by the same factors.

References

- Hopkin, S.P. (1989). 'Albino' Woodlice: do they exist? *Isopoda* 3, 29-31.
Hopkin, S. (1991). A key to the woodlice of Britain and Ireland. *Field Studies*, 7, 599-650. (Re-printed as an AIDGAP publication, offprint No. 201, Field Studies Council, Shrewsbury.)
Wijnhoven, H. & Berg, M.P. (1999). Some notes on the distribution and ecology of *Iridovirus* (Iridovirus, Iridoviridae) in terrestrial Isopods (Isopoda, Oniscidae). *Crustaceana*, 72, 145-156.

AN ANCIENT BEETLE COLLECTION SAVED

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During the late 1980s, while rummaging amongst the miscellaneous unused or discarded old equipment dumped in the basement beneath the Zoology Section of the Hunterian Museum at Glasgow University, I decided to take a close look at an old cabinet of pinned beetles which, lying open and partially on its back, was in a sorry state. The cabinet was very dilapidated. Several drawers were missing (but were later found remote from the

cabinet), some had the glass cracked and one lacked it completely. Five of the spacers between drawers were lost and 19 of the 32 ivory drawer knobs were broken. Judging by the thick coating of sooty grime on the unglazed drawer, the collection must have been there for many years. As it seemed certain that it would be consigned to a skip at a future clear out, I bought it, primarily with a view to adapting the remains of the cabinet to house my own meagre collection. It soon became evident, however, that it might be worth trying to save the collection itself so I proceeded to repair the cabinet, to a functional standard, making new spacers, casting replica knobs from epoxy resin and replacing glass where necessary. Drawers were repapered and provided with pockets for mothballs.

The collection was clearly very old with many specimens dating from around 1860 and one being labelled 1840. As might be expected the names and arrangement of species differed greatly from present day usage so a complete rehabilitation was necessary. This took several years as a part-time activity and modern checklists could not cope with many of the out-dated names. However, in about 1945, I bought a set of Fowler's classic handbooks on beetles (6 volumes including supplement published between 1889 and 1913) in the second-hand department of a Glasgow bookshop and, although I knew that this work was outdated I thought it would help me to determine the few beetles in my personal collection. These books proved indispensable to the present project because not only did they give descriptions and names current at the time of publication but they also listed numerous synonyms so that most specimens in the collection could be attributed to the names listed by Pope, 1977.

The outcome of this is that I now have an (almost) up-to-date collection of rather more than 17,500 British specimens, arranged according to Pope's list, in a 32-drawer, sound but somewhat battered, cabinet. This has proved most useful in my on-going efforts to determine material from the extensive collections, taken around 1900 by enthusiasts such as J.F.F.X. King, which are stored in the Hunterian (Zoology) Museum.

It is unfortunate that Staphylinidae, except for a few species added by myself, are entirely lacking and many Nitidulidae in the drawer lacking glass had been lost. Even allowing for these deficiencies over 87% of the (non-Staphylinid) genera listed by Pope are represented.

Fowler's books not only describe species and provide keys for their determination but also give notes on localities of occurrence along with the names of collectors. Relatively few specimens bore adequate data labels, but amongst those that did examples caught and labelled by some twenty 19th Century enthusiasts were found. This, of course,